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DEDICATORY ADDRESS BY JOHN E. FETZER OPENING
W J E F, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, FEBRUARY 4, 1945.
DELIVERED FROM W T O P, CBS FOR WASHINGTON, D.C.

Scarcely more than twenty short years ago, the nations of the world, sickened at the destruction and slaughter of warfare, pledged themselves to outlaw the use of military force as an instrument of national policy. Never again, they solemnly vowed, should man be led to organized mass slaughter of his fellow-beings.

In the historically brief time between the two world wars, the peoples of the earth had made incredible strides in the advancement of art, science and invention. Harnessing the powers of nature and converting abundant resources into things of usefulness, they had built a new and vastly improved physical world. Tireless machines performed much of the heavy toil which once bent the backs of men, dulling their senses and suppressing their spirit. In the fields of transportation and communication, man had risen above the barriers of space and geography and widened his horizon to the full circle of the earth.

Living in this enriched world, released from so many of his former physical burdens, blessed with enlarged opportunities for greater knowledge and understanding, with an increasing margin of leisure for enjoyment and inspiration, surely man had reason to look forward to an era of enlightenment and peace among the nations of the world. And yet, the unhappy fact is that today we find man once again using instrumentalities of destruction.

Discoveries of science, dedicated to prolonging and enriching life, are being used to wipe out human beings on a scale and in a manner so wanton as to eclipse the most barbaric episodes of recorded history. The ingenious and powerful machines by which we have linked together the furthestmost corners of the globe are now devoted to service in the wholesale destruction of life and property.

Among all the products of man's inventive genius, developed during the twenty years of peace, none has contributed more to the enjoyment and welfare of mankind than radio. Today, in enemy territory, radio has become a new and deadly weapon of war – more deadly than the tank, or the long-range gun, or the flying bomb. Wielding the power of radio, ambitious and unscrupulous men have destroyed men's freedoms. Seizing radio, they have used it to create distrust, to breed suspicion and hatred, to undermine men's faith and hope and courage, and to spread lies which cause mass populations to rise up against each other. Thus has the light of human liberty gone out in one country after another?

We in America have come to the unhappy realization that we ourselves may lose the freedoms we cherish unless we protect them; that the last outposts of democracy must be defended if our own democracy is to be preserved. As a result, we in this country are engaged in a determined effort to win the war. And in winning this war we not only will preserve our traditional democracy but will preserve the instrumentalities of our democratic communications.

Among the more important voices of our democratic communications is our free system of American broadcasting. So long as we enjoy our traditional system of radio, the people of this country can be assured of remaining the best informed people in the world. By keeping our radio free, we can continue to bring you the voice of a president and the voice of his opponent. We can continue to present the voice of a rabbi, priest or minister. We can

remain free to bring you the many voices that make America a fortress of freedom and a powerful arsenal of democracy in the war against dictatorship and all for which it stands.

To this effort, radio station W J E F in Grand Rapids will make its contribution. The effectiveness of W J E F in furthering the cause of the United Nations will stem from the very nature of our American system of radio broadcasting. From its inception American radio has been synonymous with freedom: freedom of speech, freedom of religious worship, freedom from government subsidy or domination. It has brought to the people of the nation, swiftly and accurately, without bias or editorial flavor, the news of every theater of war. It has promoted free public debate and discussion of the war issues of the day, and has carried the voices of leaders, in and out of government, to the furthestmost parts of the world.

Because of our desire to continue this public service in an enlarged sphere of action, it was decided by the Fetzer Broadcasting Company to establish W J E F in the city of Grand Rapids.

Our organization comes to your community life, fully aware of the tremendous responsibility that a radio station must accept in order to merit membership in the family, business and professional life of one of America's finest cities. We do not take this responsibility lightly. We know that it is our job to serve you and that, no matter how successful we might be otherwise, if we fail in this paramount objective, we have failed completely. It is our pledge that we will not fail.

We are particularly delighted to identify more actively our operations with the city of Grand Rapids during this year of 1945. We believe the establishment of W J E F is symbolic of the new opportunities which present themselves for war service in 1945; the year which marks radio's twenty-fifth anniversary. Twenty-five years ago radio was sending its feeble impulses through the air in a modest bid for public attention. Few men at that time

envisioned the greatness which has since matured for this miracle of communication. No one could have predicted the warmth and enthusiasm with which it was to be taken into the hearts and minds of the American people.

Through unanimous public acceptance, radio in America has developed into an instrument of great good. It is more than a medium of mass communication; it is a medium for mass accomplishment in a nation at war.

It would be well to remember that this gigantic industry, its past, its present, its future, rests upon one simple, almost whimsical, foundation: the ability of the broadcaster to furnish programs people want to hear. Thus rests a tremendous responsibility upon the American radio industry.

In this respect we, the operators of Radio Station W J E F, believe we know and understand our public responsibility. We stand ready at all times to serve the people, the business enterprises, the schools and other public institutions of Grand Rapids. We want you to share in the operation of this new enterprise. We want you to help us tell, day by day, the story of an honest, thriving, home-loving city.

After fifteen years in the broadcasting business, our company is delighted to identify its operation with one of Grand Rapids' oldest institutions, the Pantlind Hotel.

In the penthouse of this fine hotel, W J E F has installed modern studios, news rooms, artists quarters, a transmitting plant and bright new executive offices. From these quarters will emanate radio programs of community-wide interest. It will be our sincere purpose to represent the best in entertainment, education, religion and the public forum. In addition, our sister station, W K Z O, Kalamazoo, through the medium of the Fetzer Broadcasting Company network, will supply programs of outstanding merit to station W J E F. Likewise many programs originating in the W J E F studios will be fed to W K Z O for service to the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area.

During this period of all-out war, our first interest is up-to-the-minute news from the various theaters of combat. The W J E F news room will be serviced twenty-four hours a day with the world-wide news of the Associated Press radio wire. When necessary, any and all regularly scheduled programs will be eliminated or cut in order to bring you the very latest and most authentic war news.

Through the medium of our national and international networks, news and other programs will be presented from New York, London, Paris, Rome and here in Washington, as well as other world centers.

As a final word I should like to add that it will be the policy of Radio Station W J E F to make haste slowly. Someone has said, that in any field of endeavor, to make haste slowly means to make no premature promises of brave new worlds to come. For W J E F it means building, soundly, firmly and solidly. Radio is, after all, a mirror of the genius, of the talent and the thought of the American people. In the operation of W J E F, its level can be no higher than the general level of the education and culture of the city of Grand Rapids. It will never be any better as an educational medium than the educators who use it; it will never be any better as a vehicle of drama than the playwrights and actors of the theatre; and it will never be any more intelligent as a forum on public affairs than the people who do our thinking on public affairs.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I hereby dedicate Radio Station W J E F to the end that public interest in Grand Rapids shall be served; that it shall be an instrumentality of aiding the war effort; that it shall be a beacon of unbiased public discussion of world events, education and religion; in short, that it shall be a radio lighthouse of informed public responsibility.

Thank you and goodnight.